DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 377 558 EA 026 351

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TITLE The Application of the Knowledge Base in the Preparation of School Leaders.
PUB DATE 20 Oct 94
NOTE 14p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Education; *Administrator Effectiveness; Administrator Evaluation; *Educational Administration; Higher Education; Leadership Training; Management Development; Principals; Program Effectiveness

ABSTRACT

This paper presents an overview of literature and research on the effective preparation of school leaders. Recent research has called for greater collaboration among stakeholders and effective internships. Another way to deliver performance-based preparation is through the use of assessment centers, a validated process for measuring an aspiring administrator's skills for job-related activities necessary to administrative positions. The paper describes various activities conducted by assessment centers and the administrator-preparation program at Central Missouri State University. The program integrated the 12 dimensions of school leadership as defined by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) Assessment Center and the 21 domains as defined by the National Commission for the Principalship into its knowledge base. It also included a meaningful internship experience and a 15-hour seminar. Participating students reported that the program prepared them to cope with the predicaments they encountered as principals. Participants also performed exceedingly well in relation to other aspiring principals in the NASSP Assessment Center process. (LMI)

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ED 377 558

THE APPLICATION OF THE KNOWLEDGE BASE IN THE PREPARATION OF SCHOOL LEADERS

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BEST COPY AVAILABLE

October 20, 1994

EA 026 351

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Educational Administrator training is changing dramatically, most likely due to the effective schools research of the 1980s. According to the National Commission for the Principalship: *Principals for our Changing Schools*, "(1) the principal plays a key role in determining school effectiveness, and (2) traditional preparation and state certification programs fail to anticipate the demands placed upon principals in our changing schools" (1990).[1]

The preferred instructional mode in principal preparation programs remains the traditional lecture and discussion with clinical and simulation experiences being weakly addressed or ignored entirely. Hallinger and Murphy (1991) assert that the content covered in education administration programs does not reflect the realities of the principal's working world and when principal preparations are carefully examined, one is hard pressed to see many threads that are attached to practice or real-world problems.[2]

What kind of training produces effective principals? What behaviors does a principal need in order to be effective? Samuel Krug (1993) cites research which suggests there are five essential categories that serve to describe the wide range of behaviors in which a principal engages. They are: defining a mission, managing curriculum and instruction, supervising teaching, monitoring student progress, and promoting an effective instructional climate.[3]

Ploghoft and Perkins (1987) report results of a study in which the leadership functions of principals were examined in schools recognized as meritorious by the

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[1]National Commission for the Principalship (Principals for our changing schools: preparation and certification (1990). National Commission for the Principalship. Fairfax, VA:

[2]Hallinger, P. & Murphy, J. (1991). Developing leaders for tomorrow's schools. Kappan, 72 (7), 514.

[3]Krug, S. (1993). Leadership craft and the crafting of school leaders. Kappan, 75 (3), 240.

U. S. Department of Education. Those principals responding to the survey ranked their three most important functions as instructional supervision, evaluation of teacher performance, and curriculum development .[4]

Mark Baron (1993) surveyed superintendents to determine how they rate principal preparation. He reports that superintendents rate the importance of interpersonal/human relations skills as most important followed by instructional leadership. He concludes that superintendents perceive a large gap between the quality of principals' professional preparation and the level of development of their interpersonal and instructional leadership skills. Baron asserts, therefore, that principal preparation programs must focus more heavily on leadership oriented activities designed to strengthen interpersonal and instructional leadership skills.[5]

What should principals be taught and what they are being taught appears to be the critical issue, according to Glass (1991).[6] Drury (1989) concurs and stresses a need to bridge the gap in our leadership training between theory and practice.[7]

The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (1989) affirms that education administration training is a profession which operates far from the world of public schools.[8] Glass (1991) further suggests that education administrator preparation programs are too theory oriented, removed from reality, taught by

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[4]Ploghoft, M. & Perkins, C. (1987). Are principals prepared for leadership? The School Administrator 44 (2), 44.

[5]Baron, M. (1993). What superintendents tell us about principal preparation. Record in Educational Administration and Supervision, 13 (2), 69.

[6] Glass, T. (1991). The slighting of administrator preparation. The School Administrator, 48 (4), 29.

[7] Drury, W. (1989). Administrator training reform: here we go again! The School Administrator, 46 (10), 16.

[8]National Commission for Educational Administration (1989). Principals for our Changing Schools:Knowledge and Skill Base. Fairfax, Va:National Policy Board for Educational Administration.

professors who have never been administrators, and fail to address problems faced by administrators.[9] The Report of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration sponsored by the University Council for Educational Administration, Leaders for America's Schools, (1987) recommends to professors:

(a) Administrator preparation programs should be like those in professional schools which emphasize theoretical and clinical knowledge, applied research, and supervised practice.

(b) Professors should collaborate with administrators on reforming curricula for administrator preparation.

(c) The faculty of administrator preparation programs should have varied academic backgrounds and experience.

(d) Professional development should be included in the performance review of professors.[10]

David Parks (1991) cites three specific concepts which are being used by reformers of principal preparation programs to make them more reality based. Those concepts are mentoring, field-based preparation, and collaboration.[11]

Collaboration - Because deep discomfort exists regarding the relevance and adequacy of principal preparation programs, a more effective system for the 1990s and beyond requires economy of effort and much greater collaborative implementation by stakeholders to ensure that the principal, the profession, and the entire educational enterprise are best served." [12] In Developing School Leaders: A Call for

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[9] Glass, T. (1991). The slighting of administrator preparation. The School Administrator, 48 (4), 29.

[10] National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (1987). Leaders for America's Schools. University Council for Educational Administration.

[11] Parks, D. (1991). Three concepts shape the new roles of principals in administrator preparation. NASSP Bulletin, 75 (539), 8.

[12] Developing School Leaders: A call for collaboration: NASSP consortium for the performance-based preparation of principals, a special report of the NASSP consortium for the performance based preparation of principals (1992).

Collaboration, a Special Report of the NASSP Consortium for the Performance-Based Preparation of Principals, it is asserted that "the first priority in guaranteeing functional quality must be the analysis of current school leadership needs, with clear definitions of program and delivery system requirements."[13]

Parks (1991) emphasizes the need for collaboration between school districts and universities and contends that collaboration requires university faculty members and practitioners to devote a great deal of time in order to create the content and delivery system of a principal preparation program. He envisions a situation in which principals are asked to give feedback to the university faculty on what they have learned from their experiences, identify the skills required to do their jobs well, and brainstorm methods of using this knowledge base to form a coherent sequence of training events. The result is a complete program for the initial preparation of principals.[14]

State departments of education also appear to be calling for meaningful collaboration among stakeholders of education administration. Following is an excerpt from the publication, Missourians Prepared - Success for Every Student :

> Higher education and local school district personnel should identify and promote effective programs which foster meaningful collaboration among colleges and universities and local schools and which broaden schools' decision-making processes to include teachers and parents.[15]
>
> Along with greater collaboration and perhaps an integral part of that

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13 Developing School Leaders: A call for collaboration: NASSP consortium for the performance-based preparation of principals, a special report of the NASSP consortium for the performance based preparation of principals (1992).

14 Parks, D. (1991). Three concepts shape the new roles of principals in administrator preparation. NASSP Bulletin, 75 (539), 9.

15 Missourians Prepared - Success for Every Student. (1990) Missouri State Board of Education (Recommendatins for improving Missouri's schools in the 90s).

collaboration is a need for better and more meaningful mentoring internships.

Effective Internships - Effective internships should be the end result of collaborative planning and mentoring should be an integral part of an effective internship. According to Parks, an internship should be moved from campus classrooms to school district conference rooms and staff development facilities in order to be experienced with practitioners in field based settings.[16] Anderson (1992) agrees that universities, school districts, and administrator associations must work cooperatively to provide practical, hands-on training opportunities for aspiring school principals. He insists that a full-time internship should be a critical part of the training that prospective school leaders undergo.[17]

Thompson, Bailey, Edwards, Wilson, Livingston, and Honeyman (1989) emphasize that the effective internship program should have as its major component the research project. They describe the procedures of their own internship project in which at the beginning of the year, central office administrators in cooperation with a university representative, identify research topics of interest to the school district. Under the direction of the university supervisor, interns are assigned a topic in which they are expected to develop a thorough and scholarly problem analysis and to propose an exemplary program for implementation in the schools. [18]

New Knowledge Base - The National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration have recently issued reports outlining steps to be taken in establishing a professional knowledge base. The new knowledge base, according to Hallinger

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16Parks, D. (1991). p. 9.

17Anderson, M. (1992). Principals:how to train, recruit, select, induct, and evaluate leaders for America's schools.Clearinghouse on Educational Management reported in ERS Bulletin, 19 (5), 10.

18Thompson, D., Bailey, G., Edwards, M., Wilson A., Livingston, G., & Homeyman, D., (1989). Leadership academies: elixir for common school ills. The School Administrator, 46 (2), 24.

and Murphy (1991), is driven by practice and based on real problems. The starting point is administrative practice, not the social sciences. They conclude that by stressing the use of inductive methods of knowledge development, the movement toward a professional knowledge base mirrors the realities of the workplace much more accurately than the theory movement. They further maintain that because understanding of school administration emanates more directly from the study of practice, skill based knowledge has been religitimated.[19]

Developing School Leaders: A Call for Collaboration, the Special Report of the NASSP Consortium for the Performance-Based Preparation of Principals, calls for the universities to:

1. Provide a knowledge base (usually through courses)
2. Teach skills (simulation and/or clinical experiences)
3. Identify and recruit talent (marketing; career development)
4. Facilitate placement (endorsements and recommendations)
5. Provide technical service (resources/consultants for staff development, in service, collaborative research, traditional research, cooperative training, etc.)[20]

One means of delivering this type of performance-based preparation is through the assessment center methodology.

Assessment Center - An assessment center is a validated process for measuring skills for job-related activities for administrative positions. The National Association of Secondary School Principals was a pioneer in establishing the NASSP Assessment Center for principals and the assessment methodology has been

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[19]Hallinger,P. & Murphy, J. (1991). Developing leaders for tomorrow's schools. Kappan 72 (7), 518.

[20]Developing School Leaders:A Call for Collaboration: NASSP Consortium for the Performance-Based Preparation of Principals, A Special Report of the NASSP Consortium for the Performance Based Preparation of Principals (1992).

instrumental in helping to create our current knowledge base for principal preparation.

The NASSP Center has identified the following skills consisting of behavior dimensions which are characteristic of effective principals. The Administrative Skill Dimensions are Problem Analysis, Judgment, Organizational Ability, and Decisiveness. The Interpersonal Skills are comprised of Leadership, Sensitivity, and Stress Tolerance. Written Communication and Oral Communication make up the Communication Skills, and a category called Other Skills is comprised of Range of Interest, Personal Motivation, and Educational Values dimensions.

According to Wendel and Breed (1988), the NASSP Assessment Center was originally designed as a selection technique to establish a set of skill dimensions thought to be essential to the job profile of the school principal.[21] Wendel and Uerling (1989) were early proponents of the utility of the Assessment Center in serving many and varied functions. They write, "Assessment Center principles can be used not only to identify effective school administrators, but also to prepare potential administrators during graduate school programs."[22] Wendel, Gappa & Yusten (1990) also maintain that the assessment center holds great promise for educators in measuring the skills of participants for the purposes of both preparation and licensure. They further argue that the adoption of assessment center methodology in administrator preparation programs lags far behind its use in non-education fields and contend it should be considered in addressing reform issues.[23]

Paul Hersey (1986) asserts that when embedded in a realistic simulation, the principles of modeling, rehearsal, and reinforcement can lead to rapid skill

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[21]Wendel, F. & Breed, R. (1988). Improving the selection of principals:an analysis of the approaches. NASSP Bulletin, 72 (508), 35-38.

[22]Wendel, F. & Uerling, D. (1989). Assessment centers – contributing to preparation programs for principals. NASSP Bulletin, 72 (508), 35-38.

[23]Wendel, F., Gappa, L., & Yusten, C. (1990). Use of the assessment center method in administrator preparation programs. UCEA Review, 31 (3), 15.

development, participant enthusiasm about the development process, and an effective transfer of skills to on-the-job performance. This transfer is also enhanced and supported by continuing evaluation and feedback from a person who serves as a mentor.[24]

Campbell, Kiernan, and Stites describe workshop activities sponsored by NASSP regarding simulations which enable university networking while enhancing principal practice. *Let's Talk* is offered as a workshop using simulation experiences designed to strengthen administrator communication with various audiences. Listening and observation skills are emphasized in large, dyadic, and small-group interactions according to Campbell, Kiernan, and Stites, and individual speaking habits are examined to improve effectiveness. Videotaping is utilized and offers the possibility of learning cooperative skills and self-critiquing.[25]

NASSP's *Springfield* is another activity which is a comprehensive, long-term skill development program focusing on six generic school leadership skills. Participants experience professional growth through a comprehensive program design and proven adult development practices that include personalized needs assessment, a "safe" job-like learning environment, extensive performance feedback, clarification of goals, support from a trained mentor, and long-term follow-up.[26]

In an attempt to broaden the current knowledge base, The National Commission for the Principalship has developed a new framework for preparing principals which is also based upon the demands of the workplace. The National Commission for the Principalship (1990) began developing "performance domains" for

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[24]Hersey, P. (1986). Selecting and developing educational leaders. The School Administrator, 43 (3), 17.

[25] Campbell, B., Kiernan, S. & Stites, E. (1994). University networking: effects on principal practice. NASSP Bulletin, 78 (559), 15.

[26]Campbell, B., Kiernan, S. & Stites, E. (1994). University networking: effects on principal practice. NASSP Bulletin, 78 (559), 27.

the principalship which incorporates the skill dimensions established by the NASSP Assessment Center. These 21 domains are organized into four areas which provide a framework that recognizes the functional leadership skills and interpersonal competencies required of principals to succeed in today's school environment.[27]

The performance behaviors are:

1. Functional leadership domains to address the organizational processes and techniques by which the mission of the school is achieved.
   a. Leadership
   b. Information collecting
   c. Problem Analysis
   d. Judgment
   e. Organizational Oversight Planning
   f. Implementation
   g. Delegation

2. Programmatic domains to cover the scope and framework of the educational program, the core technology of instruction, and related supporting services, developmental activities, and resource base.
   a. Instructional Program
   b. Curriculum Design
   c. Student Guidance and Development
   d. Staff Development
   e. Measurement and Evaluation
   f. Resource Allocation

3. Interpersonal domains to consider the human relationships required to achieve personal and professional goals and organization purposes.
   a. Motivating others
   b. Sensitivity
   c. Oral Expression
   d. Written Expression

[27] National Commission for the Principalship (Principals for our changing schools: preparation and certification (1990). National Commission for the Principalship. Fairfax, VA:

4. Contextual domains to treat the intellectual, ethical, cultural, and other influences upon schools, both traditional and emerging.
   a. Philosophical and Cultural values
   b. Legal and Regulatory Applications
   c. Policy and Political Influences:
   d. Public and Media Relationships[28]

Through the establishment and application of this knowledge base for the preparation of educational leaders, performance based outcomes can be developed. Professors have a basis upon which to judge whether a prospective administrator has learned the outcomes necessary for successful on-the-job performance as a building level administrator.

William R. Drury (1989), summarizes the current predicament of what is being taught and what should be taught in asserting, "We long have known what needs to be done. What is needed now are the collective will and designated authority to get at the task." [29]

In Missourians Prepared - Success for Every Student , The Missouri State Board of Education has taken up this challenge of what needs to be done and calls for representatives of elementary, secondary, and higher education to continuously review graduate courses and programs offered for school administrators. The authors believe that such evaluation is necessary to assure that prospective administrators are adequately prepared for participation in and passage of the Assessment Center program which is mandatory for administrative certification in Missouri.[30]

The Education Administration faculty at Central Missouri State University has responded to the need for meaningful administrator preparation by integrating the 12

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[28]National Commission for the Principalship (Principals for our changing schools: preparation and certification (1990). National Commission for the Principalship. Fairfax, VA:

[29]Drury, W. (1989). Reforming administrator training: here we go again! The School Administrator, 46 (10), 16.

[30]Missourians Prepared - Success for Every Student. (1990) Missouri State Board of Education (Recommendatins for improving Missouri's schools in the 90s).

dimensions of School Leadership as defined by the NASSP Assessment Center into the foundation of the knowledge base for preparing school principals and superintendents. The 21 domains of The National Commission for the Principalship is currently being incorporated into the knowledge and skill base for the graduate preparation program. It is believed that this combined knowledge will provide a sound basis for bridging the clinical gap which exists between university classrooms and the public schools.

These skill dimensions are being articulated as performance outcomes. Along with each behavioral dimension, appropriate simulations have been and continue to be developed to enable the student to meet the desired outcome. The simulations take many forms depending upon the intended behavioral objective. Simulations have been developed for clinical supervision of teachers, in-baskets, conflict resolution, role playing, and verbal and written communication activities. In addition, appropriate case studies are utilized to allow participants to creatively problem solve and seek answers to difficult predicaments.

The preparation program culminates in a meaningful internship program. During the mentoring experience, faculty members visit the school sites and invite the on-site mentors to assign substantial on-site research projects which need to be addressed to the student intern. The University supervisor then collaborates with the on-site mentor and the intern to meet the challenge of the research project.

A 15 hour seminar is offered in conjunction with the internship. Internship students meet to share and discuss what they have learned from their on-site mentors. Practitioners are invited to the seminar to give added dimension to the students' experiences. The practitioners are invited to give input to the education administration staff members in order that the internship experience be as vital and reality based as possible.

It is important to note, perhaps, that all of the education administration faculty members are trained assessors and dedicate one 4 day period a year to serve as assessors at an NASSP sponsored Assessment Center. All are true believers in the validity of the Center and in its ability to predict which participants will become effective building level administrators. The faculty members also maintain that their experience as administrator assessors helps them to remain in touch with the current demands of the principalship. As a result, the textbooks and traditional lecture methods are delegated to the back burner. Instead, the focus is toward developing realistic workplace simulations, clinical experiences, and meaningful internships with required on-the-job action research projects.

How do the students respond to this method of administrator training? Surveys and studies of practicing principals who have gone through the program to date respond very favorably. Their responses to the simulations have been especially positive. They report that their administrator training prepared them for many of the predicaments which they faced in their role as principals and helped them to make the right choices when faced with difficult crises. An added benefit which should be emphasized is that the graduates perform exceedingly well when they go through the NASSP Assessment Center in relation to other aspiring principals. The stakeholders are convinced that the adopted knowledge base is working to the hilt and producing effective principals and effective schools.